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THE OTHER SIDE

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Kampiles

Cord Meyer

CIA Must Explain Kampiles Breach

WASHINGTON

It is enough "to make mad the guilty and appall the free." A young American, William P. Kampiles, 23, who was employed by the CIA for only eight months in 1977, was indicted a few weeks ago for selling a top secret manual to the Soviets for \$3,100.

The theft has been underreported, because the technical details of the stolen manual are highly classified. But the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Birch Bayh, D-Ind., confirms that the Soviets have bought for a bargain-basement bribe the secrets of our most advanced system of satellite surveillance in a very serious security breach. His committee has just begun to probe this stunning development.

The CIA has a lot of explaining to do. Why was one so young, untrained and untested assigned to work in the operations center through which the most sensitive information flows? How will the intelligence agency defend a record-keeping system that allowed the theft of a top secret document to go unnoticed for almost a year?

Senator Bayh is quick to concede that security problems are not confined to the CIA. In the recent leak to the New York Times of a top secret Senate committee report, Senate staff members are the prime objects of suspicion. As Bayh says about the Kampiles case, "This proves that everybody has to do the best job we can on security and that no agency is in a position to point the finger at anybody else."

However, this case proves once again that the KGB's daily bread and butter is earned by bribing low-level clerks who have access to secret documents and think they need money.

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In exercising its new oversight responsibilities, the Congress has allowed access to sensitive information to proliferate among congressional staffers. This latest leak should put new steam behind President Carter's demand that the Congress discipline itself by cutting back drastically on the number of committees and staffers who are given such access.

More serious than the security aspects of the Kampiles caper is the damage done to the prospects for ratification of the SALT agreement. In our need to verify Soviet compliance with SALT limitations, we have lost an ace in the hole that reassured skeptical senators. We had a more effective system of satellite surveillance than the Soviets realized and therefore felt reasonably secure in our ability to detect attempts to evade the SALT limitations.

Now the Soviets have been given detailed instructions on how to improve their camouflage measures as well as crucial help in a crash effort to duplicate whatever technical progress the U.S. has made.

Bayh points out that the Soviets could have been expected eventually to catch up with us in this field as in many others. What has been lost is a comfortable cushion of time. Bayh believes that this should have an immediate impact on the U.S. research and development budget.

Now that our most advanced system has been compromised, it is more vulnerable to deception and to damage by anti-satellite weapons. Bayh believes we should have "a pretty good bullpen staff" and that the U.S. should press ahead to develop an even more advanced and less vulnerable system, not only to insure SALT verification but to provide prompt, reliable intelligence during crisis confrontations.

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The Justice Department is determined to bring Kampiles to trial, although more secrets may be lost in the legal process. But Justice lawyers are going to try to limit the amount of classified information they have to reveal in open court. They admit that the Soviets already have this secret information, which the American public does not have, but they are anxious to prevent further exposure to other countries like China.

Counter-intelligence experts worry about strange aspects of this extraordinary case. Why was Kampiles so foolish as to convict himself by telling a former CIA colleague that he was in touch with the So-

viets? Assuming the Soviets had already obtained the secret technology from a higher-level agent still in place, they would need to protect him from suspicion before taking measures against satellite surveillance which would alert the U.S. The gnawing fear is that Kampiles may have been used as a decoy to distract attention from a more dangerous agent still inside our intelligence establishment.

The public needs firm reassurance that every reasonable precaution is being taken to preserve the secrets that are left. A government so loose that it suffers a running hemorrhage of its defense plans is not the sort of "open administration" that Carter promised or the voters want.